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AND

THE CREATIVE MIND

BY

ARTHUR C. JACOBSON, M.D.

BROOKLYN, N. Y.
ALBERT T. HUNTINGTON
1909

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TUBERCULOSIS AND THE CREATIVE MIND.

By Arthur C. Jacobson, M.D.,

Brooklyn-New York.

"Kings it makes gods, and meaner creatures kings."—Shakespeare.

"The sure years reveal the deep remedial force that underlies all facts."—Emerson.

I.

IF every evil has its good, what good has that devastating scourge, the great white plague, left in its wake?

For one thing, it has left a fearful lesson upon insanitary living and its inevitable penalties.[1] It has been a harsh pedagogue and has played no favorites. All mankind must conform to its prescribed curriculum, else prince and pauper alike receive the tragic demerit of tuberculous infection.

For another thing, its just vengeance, though terrible enough, is tempered with mercy, a mercy which, by way of compensation for the physical ravages with which we are all so grewsomely familiar, reveals itself in that saving grace, the *spes phthisica,* a trait which, with its associated general psychic excitation, has not only enabled the individual victims of tuberculosis to bear their burdens of disease most cheerfully, but has been a means of quickening genius, a fact wherefrom have flowed benefits that concern the whole world of intellect.

Someone has said that, next to the Newgate Calendar, the biography of authors is the most sickening chapter in the history of man. Heaven knows that Nordau has illumined the subject from his peculiar point of view. Some phases of the chapter are especially sickening to medical men, as for example De Quincey's expressed admiration of the hydrocephalic head of his sister: "—thou whose head, for its superb intellectual developments, was the astonishment of science,— * * *. For thou, dear noble Elizabeth, around whose ample brow, as often as thy sweet countenance rises upon the darkness, I fancy a *tiara* of light, or a gleaming *aureola,* in token of thy premature intellectual grandeur —thou * * * pillar of fire," etc. Again, the face of Christina

[1] Tuberculosis imposes upon the United States alone an annual loss of about $200,000,000. (Osler's "Modern Medicine.")

Rossetti became the type of a certain anemic ideal of pre-Raphaelite female beauty. She was a model for Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown and Holman Hunt. Now the chief feature of her face, worshipped by the pre-Raphaelites because of a certain pensive, wistful, melancholy expression, was her eyes. To these hysterical esthetes this spelled transcendent beauty, yet the horridly matter-of-fact explanation of it all was exophthalmic bronchocele, which afflicted her in April, 1871, lasted two years, and from the distressing effects of which she never recovered. The condition is especially manifest in D. G. Rossetti's drawing of Christina and her mother.

As the *littérateur* or artist may, occasionally, be inspired in the above manner by pathologic objects outside of himself, so, too, his own psychopathology may inspire him to creative labors, or at least color his productions; thus it is easy to discern the influence of psychopathologic states upon the works of such writers as Poe, Guy deMaupassant, Tasso, Cowper, Swift, Byron and St. John the Evangelist. The morbid imaginings of the first and second, the coprolalia of Swift, the illusions and hallucinations of St. John, the melancholia of Cowper, as reflected by their writings, are symptomatic of unhealthy mental states. Even the pure mind of Tennyson had its moments of regrettable aberration, for to what else can we ascribe his characterization of Lord Lytton, than which it would be hard to find anything nastier:

"What profits now to understand
The merits of a spotless shirt—
A dapper boot—a little hand—
If half the little soul is dirt? . . ."

Who is there familiar with only the beauties of Tennyson's mind and verse that would suspect him of having been possessed of such a talent for vileness? There was more need at such a moment for a few grains of calomel than for a poem.

Now it is entirely conceivable that the tuberculous by-products are capable of profoundly affecting the mechanism of creative minds in such a way as to influence markedly the creations. Indeed, they are bound to do so, for the *spes phthisica,* admittedly a result of such by-products, must necessarily affect the whole psychological switchboard. This is all that the present writer seeks to establish. Yet he does not maintain that it is possible to reason backward and to say, of given passages, "these were written by one afflicted with tuberculosis." The pathologist likes to know the clinical history of the cancer

suspect from whose growth scrapings have been taken before he pronounces his judgment. No neurologist could name Cowper's malady, however much he might suspect a mental twist, even after the most careful study of his poems, but, knowing the man's pathetic life struggle with the depression which finally overwhelmed him, its influence upon his writings becomes a self-evident proposition.

Dana, in his "Nervous Diseases," gives "an almost sure recipe for producing a case of paresis." A man of nervous constitution and dissipated habits acquires syphilis between the ages of twenty and thirty. He continues to drink alcohol to excess and to play the game of life hard. In ten or fifteen years he will be pretty sure to have paresis. Similarly, were the present writer to give an almost sure recipe for producing the highest type of the creative mind, he would postulate an initial spark of genius plus tuberculosis.

It is natural to think, *a priori,* that the pathological can account for little in literature or in art except the morbid, the abnormal, the depressed. This is doubtless true in the main, but, *a posteriori,* we must except tuberculosis. Certain celebrated victims have been, *par excellence,* the creators of the highest and best. The layman, unfamiliar with the curious mental trait of consumptives already alluded to, will be apt to reason that such men accomplished great things despite their infirmity, and that had they not been hampered by it, they would have accomplished still greater ones. On the other hand, the physician will find the explanation to lie most readily in that characteristic clinical trait of the tuberculous, the *spes phthisica.*[2] Their lives are shortened, physically, but quickened psychically in a ratio inversely as the shortening. The layman's reasoning is sound in a general sense, fallacious in a particular sense. Relatively abnormal hopefulness, optimism, buoyancy, represent the *prevailing*[3] psychologic phase of tuberculosis. Out of this closely related trinity, too, grows the factitious physical energy of the victims. Upon his death-bed the consumptive makes plans for twenty years ahead. Far

[2] "Death catches him like an open pitfall, and in mid-career, laying out vast projects, and planning monstrous foundations, flushed with hope. and his mouth full of boastful language."

"Some dispositions seem as the disease advances to become so ethereal that they suggest another sphere."

[3] States of depression do occasionally occur. (Exemplified by Keats, Stevenson, Schiller.)

advanced in disease, he crosses an ocean in the steerage and a continent in an emigrant train in quest of a sick friend (Robert Louis Stevenson), or acts superbly in the theater on the day of his death (Molière). Every practitioner is familiar with the extraordinary trait which enables the advanced consumptive to declare that he feels "bully" when his temperature is 104°, which enables him to walk about, to work, and fully to exercise the sexual function.[4] In no other disease *with equally extensive lesions* is the psychical and consequently the physical status equally exalted, or, we might truly say, exalted at all. Potential indeed must be the mental driving force which gets power out of a pitiable wreck.

The writer has chosen all his concrete examples from among the *littérateurs,* for the reason that it was necessary to limit the study, unless he were to write a rather huge book, so numerous have been the instances among all classes of creative minds. Thus, in the domain of art, he might have discussed the cases of Raphael, of Bastien-Lepage, of Jacquemart, of Trutat, of Habington, of Henry O'Neil, of W. H. Deverell, or of Watteau, who shaped the art of eighteenth century France. From among musical geniuses he might have selected Paganini, Von Weber, Chopin, Nevin and Purcell; from among dramatic artists, Rachel; from among physicians, Laënnec, Bichat, Rush, Trudeau, Godman and William Pepper (*secundus*); from among theologians, John Calvin; from among statesmen, Cicero; and from among empire builders, Cecil Rhodes. The great lights of literature have been selected for this reason and because of the writer's entire belief in the aphorism of Dr. Johnson, to wit: "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors."

To be sure, tuberculosis doesn't convert all talented persons into geniuses, nor mediocre people into talented ones. Moreover, many geniuses have not been tuberculous. Again, tuberculosis is not infrequently a result, and not a cause, of literary industry, although in such instances it may prove to be an intellectual asset. Right here the writer will say that he is not attempting to do anything more than to reason inductively

[4] Sidney Lanier's four children were all born during the active period of his disease. "The final consuming fever opened in May, 1880. In July he went with Mrs. Lanier and her father to Westchester, Pa., where a fourth son was born in August. * * * This winter brought a hand-to-hand battle for life. In December he came to the very door of death." —*William Hayes Ward.*

from certain facts. This reasoning is governed only by the probable. It is the same reasoning that we apply to all the phenomena of disease. Were we to abandon such a method we would end by questioning the validity of nearly all those postulates upon which modern medicine is founded, when as a matter of fact we know that these postulates enable us to solve bedside problems very successfully. They work well. Thus we would question the relation of syphilis to general paralysis and locomotor ataxia. This disease, we would say, doesn't always produce those quartenary sequelæ in its victims. Such terminations are the exception, not the rule. Moreover, there are paretics and tabetics in whom the fact of antecedent specific disease cannot be established.

This subject might be considered from four points of view. *First,* from that which considers only the man of genius suffering from tuberculosis in its frankest and most active form; *second,* from that which considers the man of genius who has been afflicted at some early period in his life, and who has *apparently* recovered, *e. g.,* Sir Walter Scott; *third,* from that which considers the man of genius who is of the phthisical habit and who may (Thoreau, Mérimée, and the author of "Hudibras") or may not (Edward Gibbon, Leopardi) develop actual consumption; and *fourth,* from that which considers the man or woman of genius, apparently not tuberculous, as a product of admittedly tuberculous stock, *e. g.,* Robert Burns, Edgar Allan Poe, Eugénie de Guérin, J. A. Froude, Sainte-Beuve, François Coppée, John Stuart Mill, William Cullen Bryant, Harriet Martineau, Byron, Charles Dickens. If we take the broad ground covered by all four of these viewpoints we have much indeed upon which to base our study. The bearing of the last upon the subject the author leaves mainly to the reader's own conjecture; that of the second and third he includes in his study in tentative fashion; that of the first he founds his thesis upon with no doubt in his own mind as to its absolute relevance.

This matter of tuberculous stock cannot be lightly dismissed. While we must, perhaps, accept Weismann's anti-Lamarckian teaching that the acquired characteristics of parents do not become the natural ones of the offspring, that is to say, are not actually transmitted, yet we are not obliged to believe that such acquired characteristics are without influence of any sort upon the offspring. However, there is no use of engaging in a discussion that would trench closely upon the academic.

II.

We shall now proceed directly to a study of those literary geniuses in whom tuberculosis appears to have been a more or less direct factor in exciting, if not inaugurating, creative ideas of the highest order.[5] We cannot, of course, account in this way for superb technique, nor perhaps in any case for the initial spark of genius. We merely predicate it, then, to be a quickener, excitant or inspirer of germinating or flowering faculties of extraordinary potentiality, which even without its influence would have marked their possessors as men of remarkable talent or moderate genius.

John Milton.—The picture of "John Milton at the Age of Twelve," in the collection of the Provost of Eton College, reveals his fragile, spiritual type of beauty as a child. The mature Milton is revealed as a sickly, hollow-cheeked man in the Faithorne engraving, after the crayon portrait at Bayfordbury (see also the George Vertue engraving).

Milton was known at Cambridge as "The Lady of Christ's," because of his delicate beauty.

He was buried at St. Giles's, Cripplegate, and in the burial registers of this church is to be found the entry: "John Milton, gentleman, consumption, chancel."

John Locke.—The author of the "Essay Concerning the Human Understanding" was also the author of an "Essay on Tussis," inspired by his personal interest in the subject of cough.

While writing the famous treatises on psychology, religion, education, government and finance which have exercised such a remarkable influence on the world's progress and civilization, Locke was all the time a victim of tuberculosis. Great Sydenham, the English Hippocrates, with whom he was closely associated in medical practice (Locke was a physician), tried hard to cure him.

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[5] It is impossible always to secure definite data as to the illnesses of famous literary geniuses. Many are said to have died of "declines," of "general breakdowns of the system," of "pulmonary affections," of "wasting diseases," of "continued coughs and fevers," of "catarrhal affections," "throat troubles," etc., etc. Much may be roughly inferred from all this. Even the records left by physicians are usually inexact and unscientific. Tuberculosis has also been regarded as a sort of stigma, hence is sometimes deliberately veiled under other terms. There are good reasons for inferring that Louis, the great French clinician, and Sir Thomas Browne, were both phthisical in their young manhood.

The Burrower portrait reveals the physiognomy and physique which we associate with the phthisical diathesis.

Alexander Pope.—Pope was a victim of Pott's disease of the spine. Morley notes that his father was similarly deformed. The immediate causes of his death were asthma and dropsy. He had a "crazy carcase." At seventeen he very nearly died. "Let those who judge him," say Garnett and Gosse, "read the account of that long disease, his life." He required to be lifted out of bed, and could not stand until he was laced into a sort of armor. He described himself as "a lively little creature, with long legs and arms; a spider is no ill emblem of him; he has been taken at a distance for a small windmill." Always a sick man, we may suspect that the tuberculous fires smouldered throughout his life. Sufficient by-products were perhaps liberated to act as a kind of lash to what would have been an extraordinary mind, even if its possessor had had a normal body.

Dr. Samuel Johnson.—Johnson was afflicted throughout much of his life by what appears to have been *lupus vulgaris.* This was the cause of the unsightly scars which marked his face. His health was always precarious, because of his "scrofulous taint," as it was then called. He came of "scrofulous" stock.

Sir Walter Scott.—Although Scott died at the age of sixty-one, after a life of prodigious industry, his health was not always good. He seems to have maintained it only by much exercise and care. It is true that he was tall and that his chest and arms were powerfully developed. In 1788, when he was about seventeen years of age, Scott had a pulmonary hemorrhage, which was followed by a lengthy illness. Previous to this, when a child of eighteen months, Scott had what his surgeon, Dr. Charles Creighton, called "a swelling at the ankle." It was this affliction which left him partially crippled. The distressing physical conditions under which he wrote "Ivanhoe" and the "Bride of Lammermoor" do not appear to have been related to his tuberculous troubles. One of the children of his daughter Sophia (Mrs. Lockhart) died of tuberculosis.

Percy Bysshe Shelley.—Shelley sank into incipient phthisis in 1817. His health had "failed" in 1815. He went to Italy on account of his health in 1818. To this period belong "Rosalind and Helen," "The Cenci" and "Prometheus Unbound," "To a Skylark," "Oedipus Tyrannus," "Epipsychi-

dion," "Ode to the West Wind," "Adonais," "Hellas" and the unfinished "Triumph of Life." These certainly represent his most "soaring thought." He was drowned in July, 1822. "No greater gift to poetry was ever given by a poet within a twelvemonth than Shelley's gift of 1819."

John Keats.—Keats's mother died of tuberculosis. In December, 1818, his brother Tom, tenderly *nursed by the poet,* succumbed to the same disease. (He had also nursed the mother.) By the autumn of 1819, after twenty months of wonderful work, "an achievement unparalleled in the history of English poetry, Keats had produced almost all the works on which his fame rests." He died on February 23, 1821. The breaking down of his health dated from the time of Tom's death. He was eager, enthusiastic, resolute. He speaks of "the violence of his temperament." Of him it may be truly said, using his own phrases, that he "died into life," destroyed by "the fever and the fret." Other great poets have warmed themselves at the fire of Keat's genius and gained much of their own inspiration therefrom. Among them have been Hood, Tennyson, Rossetti, Morris, Coleridge, and a whole host besides. He still strongly influences much of the poetry of to-day. He may be credited, then, in a sense, with a large share of the parentage of many of our greatest poems. "His influence may be traced in the tendencies to choose subjects from Greek mythology, to describe nature imaginatively but without much of the Wordsworthian spirituality, to saturate language with color, and to aim at felicity of phrase. It is also visible in many paintings."

Thomas Hood.—"A tendency to consumption on the mother's side, fatal to three of her children and ultimately to herself, was at the root of those complicated disorders which made the life of Thomas Hood 'one long disease.'" "The Song of the Shirt" (Christmas number of *Punch,* 1843), "The Haunted House," "The Lay of the Labourer" and "The Bridge of Sighs" were all written at a time when his disease was almost in the terminal stage, "proving that, as the darkness of his own prospects deepened, the sympathies with his kind deepened also, *and quickened his finest genius.*"

Laurence Sterne.—Sterne's health broke about the time of his first success (the two first volumes of "Tristram Shandy"). "The Sentimental Journey" was published on February 28, 1768, and Sterne died of consumption on March 18 of the same year.

He was one of a very large family, most of whom died in early childhood. His father died in 1731 of an "impaired constitution."

The "Journey" through France and Italy was undertaken in 1765, in an attempt to prolong his life.

Of the temperament of Sterne, no better summary can be given than is provided by himself, when, after describing some misfortune, he says: "But I'll lay a guinea that in half-an-hour I shall be as merry as a monkey, and forget it all."

"His unseemly, passionate, pathetic life burned itself away at the age of fifty-four, only the last eight of which had been concerned with literature" (Garnett and Gosse).

Thomas De Quincey.—"De Quincey, a dreamer of beautiful dreams, * * * sought with intense concentration of effort after a conscientious and profound psychology of letters." From our point of view the psychology of a great intellect as modified by tuberculosis *plus* opium.[6]

By some it is felt that this very drug habit actually hindered, in some way, the full expression of De Quincey's genius. His biographer Page says that "he did not become a dreamer because he fell under the spell of opium," and De Quincey himself says: "Habitually to dream magnificently, a man must have a constitutional determination to reverie."

De Quincey's father died of tuberculosis and a sister of tuberculous meningitis.

Surgeon-Major W. C. B. Eatwell, who studied De Quincey from a medical standpoint, points out certain manifestations of tuberculosis in a cerebral form in De Quincey's childhood. He showed decided evidences of the disease still later. De Quincey himself, in the "Confessions," says that before he wrote that book he had been pronounced repeatedly a martyr-elect to pulmonary consumption. "Without something like a miracle in my favor, I was instructed to regard myself a condemned subject. * * * These opinions were pronounced by the highest authorities in Christendom. * * * Out of eight children I was the one who most closely inherited the bodily conformation of a father who had died of consumption at the early age of thirty-nine. * * * I offered at the first glance to a medical eye every symptom of phthisis broadly and con-

[6] Gerrier, of Lyons, questions De Quincey's statements anent the influence of opium upon him, since his descriptions of opium symptoms are more than inexact; they are false.

spicuously developed. The hectic colours in the face, the nocturnal perspirations, the growing embarrassment of the respiration, and other expressions of gathering feebleness under any attempts at taking exercise, all these symptoms were steadily accumulating between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-four."

He thought that the use of opium in some way stopped the further progress of his malady, although he had no such notion in his mind when he began its use. It was first taken to relieve a neuralgia.

De Quincey died at the age of seventy-five of what his physician, Dr. Warburton Begbie, describes as a catarrhal, febrile affection of the chest with exhaustion of the system. The doctor attended him from October 22, 1859, to December 8 of the same year.

"The Confessions" were written at the age of thirty-seven.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.—Mrs Browning's "lung affection" began in 1836, at the age of thirty. A pulmonary hemorrhage occurred in 1837. The trouble has been described as a "bronchial affection." Again, biographers characterize it as "grave mischief in the lungs." Spinal trouble, which we may suspect to have been tuberculous spondylitis, is also mentioned. This would seem to be an instance in which, for some reason, those in possession of the exact facts seem to regard candor as inappropriate. The security of her fame and the loveableness of her character only make this reticence the more priggish. Her life of invalidism and of great achievement is familiar to all. *Obiit* 1861.

Kate Field said that it was difficult to believe that such a fairy hand could pen thoughts of such ponderous weight.

Molière.—Molière was quite a typical example of the tuberculous diathesis[7] and died of hemorrhage after years of semi-invalidism on February 17, 1673. Only death itself, however, interrupted his brilliant career as actor and author.

Henry Thoreau.—The health of Thoreau, another quite typical example of the tuberculous diathesis throughout his strange life, failed completely in 1861. Died 1862.

"In Thoreau, * * * it was the spirit more than the temple in which it dwelt, that made the man." (Ricketson.)

[7] In many instances it is unquestionably correct to state that the so-called phthisical habit is not an indication of a tendency to, but actually of the existence of, tuberculosis (Cohnheim—Osler). Those recent additions to our diagnostic resources, the Von Pirquet, the Moro and the Calmette or Wolff-Eisner—Vallée tests, have many times confirmed this teaching.

Johann Christian Friedrich Schiller.—Schiller's fatal sickness began in the summer of 1804. He died on May 9, 1805. On the eighth, when asked how he felt, he replied, evidently referring to his mental state, "Better and better, more and more cheerful." Again he said, with characteristic optimism, "Death can be no evil, for it is universal."

Some doubt is expressed by Schiller's biographers as to whether he really had phthisis. There appear to have been some anomalous symptoms. The writer has studied the available data very carefully and he finds it impossible to surmise what the disease was if it was not phthisis. Even his very typical *spes phthisica* was not the most characteristic of the cardinal symptoms. There would appear to be no occasion for befogging the facts other than the one exemplified by the biographers of Mrs. Browning. Still, we must not forget that in those days the specific bacillus had not been isolated—nor was the art of medicine unimpeachable.

His first attack of blood-spitting occurred in 1791. He never entirely recovered and this first attack was in reality his sentence of death. He was then thirty-two. At the time of his death he was forty-six. "It is possible," says his biographer Nevinson, "that *the disease served in some way to increase his eager activity, and fan his intellect into keener flame.*" "He wrote his finest and sublimest works when his health was gone." (Carlyle.)

"The Song of the Bell" was written in 1799.

"His face expressed a fiery ardor. * * * His enthusiasm clothed the universe with grandeur. * * * His was an imagination never weary of producing grand or beautiful forms." (Carlyle.)

His biographers tell us that he had an inexhaustible fund of cheerfulness and hope. Difficulties were thrown off, disappointments left behind. Before the critics had time to say their worst of one work, he was borne far beyond their reach by enthusiasm over the creation of the next.

"Some fortunate gift of temperament lifted him," says Meister, "like a god."

"Inspired by hope and an unquestioning confidence in the objects of his enthusiasm, in their sufficiency and ultimate triumph, he passed unscathed amidst the perils of indolence, hesitation and despair, as well as through the ordinary trials of poverty, sickness, and failure. He seemed to bear a charmed

life, and the enchantment passed from him to others. (So we have seen it was with Keats too.) Eager and unresting in the pursuit of his ideals, 'a new and more complete man every week,' he seemed to diffuse energy and enthusiasm as he went."

He was the inspiring friend of Goethe, whose mind was of a grander type. "Schiller's influence supplied the main impulse." This connection with a genius higher than his own (a fact graciously acknowledged by himself) has consecrated him.

"It was his 'inexhaustible cheerfulness,' this blessing of a sanguine and yet not impatient temperament, that more truly than his intellectual ability was the secret of his success. It was this that upheld him in the midst of trials under which men of far higher natural powers have often fallen. It was this that enabled him to withstand the innumerable cares and temptations that beset the paths of the man of letters. The irregularity of his work neither drove him to dissipation nor reduced him to impotence. Even in his rare intervals of enforced and tedious leisure he did not allow himself to despair altogether of his art. Even under the stress of writing for money he could forget to be mercenary and remain an artist. Undaunted by the indifference of the ordinary world and the small apparent effect of things poetical, he retained his high belief in the ultimate value of beauty in thought and word."

"His life was a kind of fever." (Farjeon).

At the time of his death his power of tragic conception and dramatic execution was at its highest.

The hectic afflatus of the actively tuberculous creative genius is almost incessant and he is nearly always astonishingly prolific. The inspiration of the non-phthisical genius is intermittent, his work is more deliberate, he does not burn the candle at both ends, he is normal and works sanely. The wheels are not continually in motion.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.—At the age of nineteen (July, 1768), Goethe had a severe pulmonary hemorrhage, from which he made a very slow recovery and was thought to be consumptive. (Sime). In November, 1830, he suffered another violent hemorrhage. This was a little more than a year before his death, which occurred March 22, 1832. (Lewes.) His only son died in 1830 of a "decline."

Goethe enjoyed, *apparently,*[8] exceptionally good health dur-

[8] Goethe probably would come under the fourth type of Norman Bridge's classification. (See his "Tuberculosis.")

ing the productive period of his career. Curiously enough, when he seemed to have left his own early tuberculosis behind him, he still felt the influence of the disease vicariously, through Schiller, as we have seen. We may rest assured, however, that the "latent" lesion supplied quite a few by-products.

Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson.—In Stevenson we find a striking example of the *spes phthisica.* The immediate cause of his death was cerebral apoplexy, but for years he had suffered from tuberculosis and had done his best work during this period of pathology. The occasional notes of despondency in Stevenson's letters from Vailima seem to have coincided with periods of temporary *improvement.* The literary work that he did at such times was not great. (*e. g.,* "St. Ives.")

When the disease again gains the upper hand we have "Weir of Hermiston," which promised to be his greatest work, according to himself and the critics too. He did not live to finish it. Then, when very near the grave, "he was buoyant and happy." ("Letters.")

Stevenson was an optimist—if ever there was one, and a dreamer, a transcendentalist. He would like to have us believe that "no man lives in the external truth, among salts and acids; but in the warm, phantasmagoric chamber of the brain, with the painted windows and the storied walls." Who can say he was not, at the particular moment that he wrote the above, pathologically inspired? The reader will reflect, might not such things be written by one not influenced by the *spes phthisica?* Yes, but so is it conceivable that "Kubla Khan" *might* have been written by some one not under the influence of a drug, yet no one questions the relation of drug effects to the character of certain of Coleridge's productions. The latter illustration is quite obvious, our contention relatively subtle. There is, really, as little reason for questioning the tuberculosis factor in the case of Stevenson as for questioning the inspiration of religious feeling with respect to the paintings of Fra Angelico.

"But it was not only the many delightful qualities of his written work which made Stevenson the best loved writer of his time; even more, perhaps, he was endeared to countless readers by the frank revelation of a most engaging personality, which shines through all his works—of a serene, undaunted cheerfulness * * *."

Sidney Lanier.—Our greatest lyric poet since Poe is a perfect type of the tuberculous genius. He produced nothing of any

consequence until after he became afflicted. His work improved as his malady advanced, and his greatest work, "Sunrise," was composed on his death-bed (1881). Making all allowance for natural improvement in technique and for increased intellectual breadth, we cannot summarily dismiss consideration of the phthisical element. It stirred his soul into expression in the beginning and as time passed on became more and more excitative. "The fire in the flint showed not until it was struck."

Early in 1874, Lanier, then greatly wasted, having been tuberculous since January, 1868,[9] a period of six years, wrote to his wife: "So many great ideas for art are born to me each day, I am swept away into the land of All-Delight by their strenuous sweet whirlwind; and I find within myself such entire, yet humble, confidence of possessing every single element of power to carry them all out, * * * I do not understand this."

Lanier's mother died of tuberculosis.

No tuberculous genius has, himself, so well expressed the psychology of the tuberculous. Thus, in 1873, he writes to his wife from Texas: "Were it not for some circumstances which make such a proposition seem absurd in the highest degree, I would think that I am shortly to die, and that my spirit hath been singing its swan-song before dissolution. All day my soul hath been cutting swiftly into the great space of the subtle, unspeakable deep, driven by wind after wind of heavenly melody. The very inner spirit and essence of all wind-songs, sex-songs, soul-songs and body-songs hath blown upon me in quick gusts like the breath of passion,[10] and sailed me into a sea of vast dreams, whereof each wave is at once a vision and a melody."

Pathological, of course. This man's children were badly off for the necessaries when he wrote the lines just quoted, yet he was in the seventh heaven.

Later he wrote again to his wife: "Know, then, that disappointments were inevitable, and will still come until I have

[9] There are reasons for believing that his tuberculosis dated from 1865.

[10] Compare Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" (see Shelley sketch):

"Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of its mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be though, spirit fierce,
My spirit! be thou me, impetuous one!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth;
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O wind,
If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

fought the battle which every great [*sic*] artist has had to fight since time began. This—dimly felt while I was doubtful of my own vocation and powers—is clear as the sun to me now that I know, through the fiercest tests of life, that I am in soul, and shall be in life and utterance, a great poet."

Clearly written in a pathologically exalted frame of mind. To ascribe such utterances to any other cause would be uncharitable. One must have something besides genius in him to write so, even to one's wife.

These exalted ideas were not limited to his poetry. In 1873 he wrote to his father: "Several persons, from whose judgment there can be no appeal, have told me * * * that I am the greatest flute-player in the world; * * *."

He compares himself with Schubert and Schumann in music and with Keats in poetry. Swinburne was presumably inferior: "He invited me to eat; the service was silver and gold, but no food therein save pepper and salt." Of William Morris he said: "He caught a crystal cupful of the yellow light of sunset, and persuading himself to dream it wine, drank it with a sort of smile." Again: "Whitman is poetry's butcher. Huge raw collops slashed from the rump of poetry, and never mind gristle—is what Whitman feeds our souls with." And the trouble with Poe was, he did not *know* enough. "He needed to know a good many more things in order to be a great poet."

The foregoing quotations are too evidently odious comparisons with a certain member of the poet's guild; and all of them show pathological exaltation. Remember that he *wrote* these things; they were not verbal quips.

"Sunrise," the last completed poem, written in December, 1880, when the poet was rapidly approaching his end, was composed at a time when he was running a temperature of 104°. It is considered "the culminating poem, the highest vision of Sidney Lanier." He was then unable to lift his hand and was being fed by his attendants.

"What he left behind him was written with his life-blood. High above all the evils of the world he lived in a realm of ideal serenity," writes William Hayes Ward.

Ralph Waldo Emerson.—The father of Emerson died at forty-two of "a consuming marasmus," vainly combated for some months. Ralph Waldo himself was a slender, delicate youth (Hill). He was not vigorous in body as a schoolboy (Loring). There was a family tendency to "chest-disease."

(James Elliott Cabot, p. 219, vol. I, "A Memoir of R. W. E.") A study of Emerson's portraits reveals certain stigmata of the phthisical habit: narrow chest, sloping shoulders, small thorax. Although nearly six feet in height he weighed only about 140 pounds when fully matured and in his best health. He is described as being somewhat stooped, or round-shouldered. We may infer that the prominence of the alæ scapulæ described by all clinicians from Hippocrates downward as one of the stigmata of tuberculosis was partly responsible for this. Throughout his life his health was precarious and even at his best he was "oppressed by a feeling of physical insufficiency."

Thirty was the critical age with all the Emerson brothers. Ralph Waldo's health breaking in 1826, he spent the winter and spring of 1826-7 in the Southern States. His health had not permitted him to take the regular course at the Theological School in 1823 and he had been merely "approbated to preach."

One of Emerson's biographers tells us that as a boy he was never seen to run. The brothers Edward and Charles both died at about the age of thirty.

In 1831 Emerson's first wife died of consumption and he again found himself broken in health. He spent seven months of 1833 in Europe with apparent recovery.

There is some suggestive correspondence belonging to the 1826-7 period. "It would give me great pleasure to be well," he writes in September, 1826. He was then too weak to take any exercise. To William Emerson he writes on January 6, 1827, from Charleston, S. C.:

"I have but a single complaint, a certain stricture on the right side of the chest, which always makes itself felt when the air is cold or damp, and the attempt to preach, or the like exertion of the lungs, is followed by an aching."

From Alexandria, D. C., he writes to his aunt on May 15, 1827:

"I am waiting here in pleasant durance until the sun will let me go home. For I am too delicate a body to brave the northeast winds with impunity. If I told you I had got well, I believe I deceived you and myself. For I am not sure I am a jot better or worse than when I left home in November; only in this, that I preached Sunday morning in Washington without any pain or inconvenience. I am still saddled with the demon stricture, and perhaps he will ride me to death. I have not lost my courage, or the possession of my thoughts. * * *"

To William he writes again, this time from Boston, under date of June 24, 1827:

"I am all clay, no iron. I meditate, now and then, total abdication of the profession, on the score of ill health. It is now the evening of the second Sunday that I have officiated all day at Chauncey Place. Told them this day I won't preach next Sunday, on that account. Very sorry—for how to get my bread? Shall I commence author. Of prose or of verse? Alack, of both the unwilling Muse. Yet am I no whit the worse in appearance, I believe, than when in New York, but the lungs in their spiteful lobes sing sexton and sorrow whenever I only ask them to shout a sermon for me. * * *"

Still later he writes to William from Cambridge, August 31, 1827:

"I am going to preach at Northampton for Mr. Hall, a few weeks. His church is a small one, and I shall be able to preach all day, I suppose, without inconvenience. * * * I am not so well but that the cold may make another Southern winter expedient."

December 14, 1827: "* * * My health quite the same stupid riddle it has been."

February 8, 1828: "* * * I am living cautiously; yea, treading on eggs, to strengthen my constitution. It is a long battle, this of mine betwixt life and death, and it is wholly uncertain to whom the game belongs. * * *"

April 30, 1828: "* * * Am said to look less like a monument and more like a man. * * * Especially I court laughing persons, and after a merry or only a gossiping hour, when the talk has been mere soap-bubbles, I have lost all sense of the mouse in my chest * * *."

He was not subjected to any formal examination by the ministerial council which "approbated" him to preach. He once said that he would not have been able to qualify had an examination been held. It may be that the council was merciful, believing that the young man had not long to live and work. Here we may say that Emerson never acquitted himself well in any kind of college *work*. In mathematics he was a self-confessed "dunce." He knew literature, however, as hardly any other man had ever been known to know it before. We may look equally to his semi-invalidism as to his temperament and bent of mind for an explanation of these things.

The insanity of his brother Edward appears to have been

of the tuberculous type first noted by Esquirol and later discussed by Mickle in his Gulstonian lectures. Baldwin, McCarthy and Clouston also recognize such a type. It occurred in the course of his "decline." He recovered from it (the insanity) but continued to decline and died a few years afterward of consumption.

The question naturally suggests itself: how much of Emerson's intense and characteristic optimism[11] was pathological? Apparently paradoxical, the idea of pathological optimism is conceivable in Emerson's case—pathological, of course, in respect of toxinic influence, since optimism, *per se,* is, of course, never associated with the idea of abnormality. Even if unjustified in point of fact, we applaud it almost always as a splendid human trait in a world of trouble. There were periods in Emerson's life when, sorely tried by poverty, by his own illnesses, and by the Nemesis of disease which hung over his whole family, he had about as much reason to be pessimistic as any man ever had, yet we find but slight evidence of anything in all his life save almost transcendental cheerfulness and hope. Once, when his brother lost his reason, do we find him voicing doubt in a letter to his aunt. Again, in his journal, he speaks of his peevishness and poor spirit. We must, of course, take into account his fundamental temperament, his mental equipment and education and his singularly beautiful home training in estimating these things. Yet we cannot ignore his phthisical habit in the light of Cohnheim and Osler's understanding of that condition. This hypotrophy, as Jaccoud calls it, or abionergy, to use Solis-Cohen's term, must first be reckoned with in studying his early life; then, later, account must be taken of the actual bacillary stage that supervened in 1826. The micrococcal stage, or true consumption, he never reached.

Emerson's tremendous influence upon modern thought and life has been most adequately stated by President Eliot.

Honoré de Balzac.—The greatest of novelists died of nephritis. There was a cardiac complication which two physicians pronounced hypertrophy in 1849. After his death, another physician, who had been friend and medical adviser for many years, when asked to give a statement as to the causes thereof, named "a longstanding disease of the heart complicated by marked albuminuria" (Dr. Nacquart).

However, if one reads the "Letters," he will find much to

[11] Acquiescence and optimism constituted his whole philosophy. So he declared in a letter to Carlyle.

more than justify the suspicion that this creator of 2,000 characters, 50 volumes, and of at least 325 separate and titled creations (424?) also suffered from tuberculosis.

The heart disease is described as "simple" hypertrophy. Probably it was secondary to the nephritis. Aneurism is also mentioned. Arteriosclerosis suggests itself in this connection. The heart lesion probably accounts for the long duration of the pulmonary affection, in accordance with well known clinical facts.

Gould, in his brilliant "Biographic Clinics," has shown very convincingly the influence exerted by eyestrain upon Balzac's literary life and pathological history. The data which the letters provide for Gould's masterly analysis are almost equalled in suggestiveness by similar data bearing upon the topic of tuberculosis. Here the author's inductive method is practically Gould's method.

Balzac once wrote: "When I was quite a young man I had an illness from which persons do not recover; nineteen out of twenty die." We can only infer what this illness may have been, but the remark almost irresistibly suggests tuberculosis. As a boy he was thin and puny. At fourteen he had an illness characterized by feverish symptoms which clung to him persistently.

"The doctor wants me to travel for two months" (1834).

"My cold is precisely the same" (1835).

"I have fever every day" (1835).

"I am a prey to the horrible spasmodic cough I had at Geneva, and which, since then, returns every year at the same time. Dr. Nacquart declares that I ought to pay attention to it, and that I got something which he does not define, in crossing the Jura. The good doctor is going to study my lungs. This year I suffer more than usual" (1836).

"My health is extremely bad" (1836).

"Physical strength is beginning to fail me" (1836).

"My forces are being exhausted in this struggle; it is lasting too long; it is wearing me out" (1836).

"* * * A nervous sanguineous (!) attack. I was at death's door for a whole day" (1836).

"All the mucous membranes are violently inflamed" (1836).

"I entered the garret where I am with the conviction that I should die exhausted with my work" (1836).

"I am ordered to go to Touraine for a month to recover life, and health" (1836).

"I must submit to physicians, humbly, or I shall quickly be destroyed" (1836).

"Touraine has given me back some health" (1836).

"Then, after getting over that semi-ridiculous illness ("cholerine"), I was seized by the grippe, which kept me ten days in bed" (1837).

"This illness has made me lose six irreparable weeks" (1837).

"I ended by getting an inflammation of the lungs, and I came to Touraine by order of the doctor, who advised me not to work, but to amuse myself, and walk about. * * * As for working, that is impossible; even the writing of these few lines has given me an intolerable pain in the back between the shoulders; and, as for walking, that is still more impossible; for I cough so agedly that I fear to check the perspiration it causes by passing from warm to cool spots and breezy openings. I thought Touraine would do me good. But my illness has increased. *The whole left lung is involved,* and I return to Paris to submit to a fresh examination" (1837).

"None but myself know the good Switzerland does" (1837).

"The moment the publication of the last part of the '*Etudes de Moeurs*' was over, my strength suddenly collapsed * * * and I foresee it will be so every fourth or fifth month. My health is detestable, disquieting; but I tell this only to you" (1837).

"* * * if there is success, success will come too late. I feel myself decidedly ill. I should have done better to go and pass six months at Wierzschovnia than to stay on the battlefield where I shall end being knocked over" (1837).

"Such fevers * * * crush me" (1838).

"My situation is more painful than it has ever been. Doctor Nacquart preaches vehemently a journey of six weeks" (1840).

"Nacquart said to me brutally yesterday, while writing his prescription, 'You will die.' 'No,' I said, 'I have a private god of my own; a god stronger than all diseases'" (1844) (Here speaks the *spes phthisica.*)

"I feel young, full of energy * * * before new difficulties" (1846).

"I should have been dressed differently and so escaped my cold" (1846).

"I took cold at Kiev, which has made me suffer long and cruelly. The treatment I have been undergoing for my heart

and lung trouble is uninterrupted. * * * I have reached the stage of absolute muscular weakness in those two organs, which causes suffocation for no cause at all. * * * However, this last cold is getting better, and they are going to try and remedy the muscular exhaustion—otherwise, the journey home would be very difficult. I have had to get a valet—being unable to lift a package, or to make any movement at all violent" (1849).

"I am as thin as I was in 1819; * * *" (1849).

"I took the most dreadful cold I have had in my life" (1850). (The letters record colds, colds, colds, and grippes, grippes, grippes, over a period of twenty years.)

"I have had a serious relapse in my heart trouble and also in the lung" (1850). *Obiit* August 17, 1850, at the age of fifty-one.

Yet the patient retained *hopes* of himself, we are told by Dr. Nacquart. Victor Hugo declares that even a month before his death he was perfectly confident about his recovery, and was gay and full of laughter.

He projected herculean labors when nearly dead. The day before he died he is said to have pleaded with his physician to keep him alive for six weeks longer, in order that he might finish his work. "Six weeks with fever," he said, "is an eternity. Hours are like days * * * and then the nights are not lost" (Houssaye).

Gautier dilates upon his extraordinary optimism in respect of his disease. (*"Portraits Contemporains—Honoré de Balzac."*)

"His vivacity and hopefulness never forsook him for long. Even in his terrible state of health in 1849 and in spite of his disappointment at the non-appearance of *'Le Faiseur,'* he was in buoyant spirits" (Sandars).

Jane Austen.—"The insidious consumption which carried her off seemed only to increase the powers of her mind; she wrote while she could hold pen or pencil, and the day before her death composed stanzas instinct with fancy and vigour." Died July 18, 1817.

Edward Fitzgerald styled her "perfect." "There are in the world no compositions which approach nearer to perfection" (Macaulay). "Approached nearest to Shakespeare in character-drawing" (Macaulay—Pollock). Goldwin Smith classes her among the great creative minds.

Samuel Butler.—The author of "Hudibras" died of tuberculosis September 25, 1680. The first part of his famous work

was written at some time between 1648 and 1663, the second part about 1664, and the third part about 1678. It is probable that the type of pulmonary tuberculosis from which he suffered was that which occurs at or near middle age and pursues a very slow, chronic course. "He was of a sanguine temperament." Butler was fifty before he became famous and was sixty-nine at the time of his death. He was the Byron of his age, in point of merited popularity.

Edward Gibbon.—The author of the "Decline and Fall" impresses upon us in his "Autobiography" (pp. 36-112-219) that as a boy he exhibited "a tendency to the consumptive habit." "I have never known the insolence of active and vigorous health." "The progress of my education was * * * often interrupted by disease." His body bore many evidences of the lancet, he tells us, mementoes of his boyhood "tendency." (Tuberculous adenitis, the writer presumes.)

Francis Beaumont.—Beaumont and Fletcher were the "great Twin Brethren" of the Jacobean drama. Beaumont was born in 1584 and died in 1616, his life spanning a bare thirty-two years. Here was a productive genius indeed. Drayton ascribed an elder brother's death to a too fiery brain or overwrought body. Dyce quotes Bishop Corbet as singing of Francis:

> *"So dearly hast thou bought thy precious lines;*
> *Their praise grew swiftly, as thy life declines.*
> *Beaumont is dead, by whose sole death appears,*
> *Wit's a disease consumes men in few years."*

This "passionate and fiery genius" died of a "decline," the old writers tell us. "Decline" is good Old English for tuberculosis. It was good enough terminology even for the medical lights of that day.

Jean François Marie Arouet de Voltaire.—What was the disease that afflicted the wonderful scamp who made such a tremendous impression upon the society of his own and all later days—mostly for good, the disease which made of him "a spectre, with the odour of an embalmed corpse"?

Nowhere in the mass of Voltairean literature which the author has scanned has he found any specific and definitive pronouncement as to what his malady really was. Certain data, however, permit the inference of tuberculosis. So, at least, it would seem to the writer, who, however, may be considered biased in the premises.

We know these things, however. First, that he was a puny, marasmic infant, the child of a delicate mother who died when he was seven years of age; that he was nine months old before he could be publicly baptized; that he was sickly throughout his long life and of wretched constitution (Espinasse), and that he had a pulmonary hemorrhage on February 25, 1778. He himself bears ample testimony to his miserable health, as in the letter quoted by Lord Brougham, when he speaks of his "crazy constitution." It was Mme. de Staal-Delaunay who harshly characterized him in the words quoted at the beginning of this biographic clinic. Again, we read that "his constitution, at all times sufficiently robust to sustain the most active labors of the mind, was yet too delicate to bear any other sort of excess." Doctor Burney described him as follows: "It is not easy to conceive it possible for life to subsist in a form so nearly composed of mere skin and bone." Voltaire remarked to Burney that he, Voltaire, supposed the doctor was anxious to form an idea of the figure of one walking after death. Yet "his eyes and whole countenance were still full of fire; and though so emaciated, a more lively expression cannot be imagined."

When he was twenty-four the Duchess of Berry described him as "that wicked mummy"; and Sainte-Beuve tells us about his "fleshless grin." His portraits speak volumes to the clinician.

Baruch Spinoza.—The famous Spinoza was for many years of his life a victim of tuberculosis and he died of it on February 21, 1677.

He has had perhaps the most pervasive influence of any modern philosopher except Kant. "Not only metaphysicians, but poets such as Goethe, Wordsworth and Shelley, have gone to him for inspiration, and the essence of his thought has been in large part appropriated in the poetic pantheism of modern interpretations of nature."

The salient features of his temperament were those which we associate with the *spes phthisica.*

Georges Maurice de Guérin.—This true and rare genius lived but twenty-eight years. He was a French Keats, in a sense. Sainte-Beuve said of him: "No French poet * * * has rendered so well the feeling for nature."

Matthew Arnold remarks that "his expression has, * * * more than Keat's, something mystic, inward, and profound."

Arnold continues, and the passage is very significant for us: "In him, as in Keats, * * * the temperament, the talent

itself, is deeply influenced by their mysterious malady; the temperament is *devouring*; it uses vital power too hard and too fast, paying the penalty in long hours of unutterable exhaustion and in premature death."

"The germs of destruction and premature death which were sown in the core of his organism, in the roots of life, were frequently transferred to his moral nature * * *" (Sainte-Beuve).

David Gray.—Gray died at the early age of twenty-three. He was an exceedingly precocious child. "In the Shadows" were sonnets composed during the latter part of his illness. "They possess, these sonnets, a touching and solemn beauty. * * * His poems possess the distinct individuality of true genius. * * * They give evidence of an underlying wealth of imagination and sentiment, of a true and vigorous power of conception, and of a gift of clear and strong, yet subtle and tender, musical utterance."

Henri Frédéric Amiel.—This "curious projection into reality of the Shakespearean Hamlet" died of "heart disease, complicated by disease of the larynx" (Laryngeal phthisis). "He suffered much and long." The last seven years of his life was a physical martyrdom. The *"Journal intime"* contains many suggestive passages.

"For the secret of Amiel's malady is sublime, and the expression of it wonderful," writes his friend Scherer.

His mother died when thirty, his father at not much more than that age. As a boy he was delicate. He was sensitive and impressionable, but was not thought precocious. Through practically his whole life his health was "low."

On September 11, 1873, he writes in the "Journal" at Amsterdam, whither he had gone in search of health, about his fever, his wasting, and his throat. All are worse. Then he alludes to his *eager hopefulness* springing up afresh after all disappointments, yet unwarranted by the experience which his reason tells him is invariably unfavorable.

January 2, 1875.—"Could I be more fragile. * * * I know that the ground is slipping from under me and that the defence of my health is already a hopeless task."

July 12, 1876.—"Trouble on trouble. My cough has been worse than ever. * * * The process of demolition seems more rapid."

April 19, 1881.—"A terrible sense of oppression. My flesh and my heart fail me."

Here the life and the record terminate.

Marie Bashkirtseff.—"One of the most individual characters in the literary annals of the Nineteenth Century," Marie Bashkirtseff, died of consumption at the age of twenty-four. The paintings which she left show great promise, but the "Journal" is unparalleled in literature (Gladstone). The disease was present throughout her active intellectual life, for she had contracted it as a child from a governess.

At seventeen she writes that it is art alone that keeps her alive.

May not the "intellectual eroticism" which disfigures the suppressed portion of the "Journal" be the psychological equivalent of the factitious sexual stimulation so often observed in the tuberculous?

Washington Irving.—"The most successful writer of the New World" was a delicate boy and showed no inclination to study, being "a dreamer and a saunterer." This was attributed to "a hereditary tendency to pulmonary disease." In 1804 he manifested symptoms of incipient phthisis and spent two years in France, Italy, England and the Netherlands. He returned "in improved health."

John R. Green.—The author of the "Short History of the English People," and of its later expansion, the "History of the English People," was afflicted by tuberculosis in 1869. During the five years immediately following he wrote the "Short History." The later work was published in 1878-80. Green died in 1883, aged forty-six. As a historian he possessed "brilliant and extraordinary imaginative power," in the sense that "he threw himself into the life of the distant past and made it live again in his pages."

Richard Baxter.—"Once started as an author, Baxter literally poured out book after book—great folios, thick quartos, crammed duodecimos, pamphlets, tractates, sheets, half-sheets, and broadsides." Orme's list, also Grosart's, shows 168 distinct books. The great Presbyterian divine "was an extraordinary man. In his physique naturally weak, and tainted from the outset with consumptive tendencies (continued ill-health, marked by violent cough and spitting of blood), * * * he so conquered the body that he did the work of a score of ordinary men as an author alone. Baxter had beyond all dispute a penetrative,

almost morbidly acute brain. He was the creator of our popular Christian literature."

The portrait in the National Gallery shows a face and figure reminding one somewhat of the wasted Stevenson of Saint-Gaudens's medallion and Sargent's canvas.

Charlotte Brontë ("Currer Bell").—All of the Brontë sisters died of tuberculosis. The brother, Branwell, also died of the same disease.

The girls appear to have been of the precocious type which we associate with the rather characteristic physical delicacy that so often, in the young, denotes a tendency to tuberculosis.

Maria died in her twelfth, Elizabeth in her eleventh year. Branwell died in his thirty-first year, Emily at the same age. Ann succumbed in her twenty-ninth year. Charlotte died on March 31, 1855, aged thirty-eight. (In private life Mrs. A. B. Nicholls).

Here we have a remarkable instance of an entire family afflicted by the disease and three sisters who reached adult life displaying extraordinary intellectual faculties.

Critics are somewhat divided as to who was the ablest, some favoring Emily ("Ellis Bell"). She possessed a powerful and fantastic imagination. The world's verdict, of course, has been in favor of the author of "Jane Eyre"—and the world is usually right. Ann ("Acton Bell") is ranked third.

Matthew Arnold declared that for passion, vehemence, and grief, Emily had had no equal since Byron. Charlotte possessed a great insight into character, a fiery imagination, and "an extraordinary, indeed astonishing, power of expressing passion, with an equal power of giving reality to her pictures which transfigures the commonest scenes and events in the light of genius."

What figures, real or imaginative, could be more pathetic than the fragile little Brontë children, dedicated from birth to the great white plague. Think of them in their lonely walks over the great moors which stretched about their father's gloomy rectory, with absolutely no companions and no childish joys. Yet what a victory did they snatch from their death, as they wasted and wore away. Where is the sting of such a death? Whose the real victory? "Give me thy body," says Tuberculosis to Genius, "and I will give thee Immortality, an immortality more sure than any promised by the theologians. Thou shalt be enshrined forever in posterity's heart and brain. Thou must,

in any case, later or sooner, die of some disease or hurt. What matters it physically whether it be tuberculosis at thirty-eight or apoplexy at seventy-eight? What it matters intellectually is of an import indeed tremendous. Shall such an exchange be rated unfair to thee or to mankind? And mankind must be afflicted if thou art to be infected. Ah, well, mankind must pay well for its highest genius. Too dearly, say'st thou? Nay, not so. 'Upon such sacrifices the gods themselves throw incense.' "

Jean Jacques Rousseau.—There is some obscurity as to just what caused the death of Rousseau. Morley inclines to the suicide theory.

"He was born dying, and though he survived this first crisis by the affectionate care of one of his father's sisters, yet his constitution remained infirm, sickly, and disordered."

He refers in the "Confessions" to the ill-health of his youth.

In 1733, when about twenty-one years of age, Rousseau's health began to show signs of a complete breakdown. He became very weak, suffered from palpitation and shortness of breath, and had pulmonary hemorrhages. He suffered from a slow feverishness, from which he never afterward became entirely free. "His mind," says Morley, "was as feverish as his body," a suggestive comment, indeed.

John Ruskin.—"The writer of the Victorian era who poured forth the greatest mass of literature upon the greatest variety of subjects" possessed an "organization of abnormal delicacy." At sixteen he had a sharp attack of pleurisy. At twenty-one, while at Oxford, he had an alarming hemorrhage from the lungs. His University career was thus suddenly broken. "For nearly two years he was dragged about from place to place, and from doctor to doctor, in search of health." He had a series of "fevers" while in Italy and the Alps. Immediately upon his marriage his pulmonary disease again became alarmingly manifest (April 10, 1848). He remained invalided until August.

Ruskin wrote more than eighty distinct works upon subjects comprising "Mountains, Rivers and Lakes; about Cathedrals and Landscapes; about Geology; about Minerals, Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, Music, Drawing, Political Economy, Education, Poetry, Literature, History, Mythology, Socialism, Theology, Morals." He was indeed "a brilliant and noble genius * * * who in the English-speaking world left the most direct and visible imprint of his thoughts."

"Modern Painters" and "The Seven Lamps of Architecture"

belong to the period of his active tuberculosis and inaugurated the long list of his epoch-making works.

Charles Kingsley.—We read in Mrs. Kingsley's work of the repeated "breakdowns" of Canon Kingsley. In 1849, at thirty, he was in ill-health. In 1864-5, at the time of the Newman controversy, his health again became precarious. He goes to the continent with Froude. At Denver, Colorado, in 1874, he has an attack of pleurisy; in 1874-5, he is " a shrunken figure." On November 30, 1874, he contracts a "cold," develops a bronchitic cough, and takes to bed December 28. Repeated hemorrhages occur, and on January 23, 1875, he finally succumbs.

Robert Southey.—Southey suffered from a "nervous fever" in 1800-1. A year in Portugal "restored his health." He was then twenty-six. "Thalaba, the Destroyer," was finished during this period. Although his health is alleged to have been restored in 1801, Eldridge's drawing in the National Portrait Gallery, made in 1804, shows a delicate appearing man. The same may be said of Phillips' and of Hancock's portraits.

Nathaniel Hawthorne.—At the age of nine Hawthorne met with an accident. A ball struck him upon the foot and he was severely lamed. He was kept at home for a long time and had not completely recovered before his twelfth year.

Pickard says: "Nathaniel received an injury to his foot when eight or nine years of age, and was obliged to use crutches for a time. He later had an illness which compelled him to resume his crutches."

His sister Elizabeth tells us that "his foot pined away and was considerably smaller than the other. He had every doctor that could be heard of * * * he went upon two crutches. Everybody thought that, if he lived, he would be always lame. * * * It was during his long lameness that he acquired his habit of constant reading. Undoubtedly he would have wanted many of the qualities which distinguished him in after life, if his genius had not been thus shielded in childhood."

Here, very evidently, is an example of localized, joint tuberculosis. The injury was the exciting cause acting with and upon a predisposing one. This is the usual history in such cases.

Like Scott, this "most eminent representative of a literature, * * * the most valuable example of the American genius," "became a vigorous, ruddy-faced, broad-shouldered, handsome

man." Open air life on the family farm at Sebago Lake, Maine, saved him.

The description of his last days, as given by Julian Hawthorne and Mrs. Lathrop, is quite suggestive. He was taken to see Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes in March, 1864. He was led to think that the visit was purely social, but Holmes had been asked to give the family some idea of Hawthorne's condition, which was giving the family great concern. Holmes thought him to be suffering from "a gradual wasting or consumption of the bodily organs." This is not Oslerian diagnosis, but it was probably the most that Holmes could tactfully determine without defeating the family's idea of not apprising Hawthorne of the visit's real object.

Robert Pollok.—At the age of twenty-eight, just as he was becoming justly famous, Pollok died of pulmonary tuberculosis. He is considered to have shown marked force and originality, and "The Course of Time," for so young a man, was "a vast achievement."

Michael Bruce.—Bruce died of phthisis at the early age of twenty-one. The "Elegy" was written in the spring of 1767, "with death full in his view."

> *"Oft morning dreams presage approaching fate;*
> *And morning dreams, as poets tell, are true.*
> *Led by pale ghosts, I enter Death's dark gate,*
> *And bid the realms of light and life adieu."* [11]

Hannah More.—At all periods of her life Mrs. More had been liable to a chronic affection of the chest, accompanied with fever. Her strength, she herself said, was all superinduced; "none of it is natural to me."

Of herself she observed that "she never felt so sensible to the majesty and beauty of the Psalms, or so capable and desirous of writing a commentary upon them, as when upon a sick-bed." And "Bishop Porteus, whenever he heard she was confined to her bed by sickness, always said he looked for a new book from her."

Pierre Jean de Béranger.—"The Burns of France" tells us in his "Memoirs" that in 1801 his constitution was very feeble. "No one believed that, pale and meagre as I was, I should ever attain to my thirtieth year. My chest appeared to be in a very

[11] The reader will observe a suggestive parallelism between these words of Bruce and certain of Shakespeare's "Sonnets" (see the Shakespeare study which follows).

bad condition, and my father was constantly repeating to me, 'You have not long to live, I shall bury you soon.' Neither of us was affected at such a prospect." (They were all but starving in a garret.)

Béranger had been a sickly child. When he became famous, in 1813, he was thirty-three and in wretched health.

So great was the popularity of the national song-writer of France that it has been said of him that "he was the only poet of modern times who could altogether have dispensed with printing"—for "one man sang his songs to another over all the land of France."

Toru Dutt.—This exotic flower of genius died at the age of twenty-one. The last four years of the life of the high-caste Hindu poetess were spent in the old garden house at Calcutta, "in a feverish dream of intellectual effort and imaginative production."

"When we consider," says Gosse in his "Memoir," "what she achieved in the last forty-five months of her life, it is impossible to wonder that the frail and hectic body succumbed under so excessive a strain."

William Ellery Channing.—Channing's life tends to parallel Emerson's in its physical aspect as it does in its intellectual.

The brother Francis dies in 1810 of tuberculosis. William Ellery himself spends the years 1822-3 in Europe because of wretched health. He is now forty-two. The father had died young (in 1793, aged thirty-six), leaving a widow and a large family. William Ellery is afflicted most of his life by a chronic debility accompanied with fever. William H. Channing, in the "Memoirs," alludes to "the wasted form, thin features and sunken eyes of the preacher, whose spirit seemed about to cast aside the body." Upon his dying bed the man's intellectual processes are exalted, recalling those of Lanier.

The portraits of Washington Allston and of Gambardella reveal the phthisical physiognomy.

Immanuel Kant.—Kant was of weak frame. He was barely five feet in height. His chest was concave, the right shoulder drawn downward—characteristic evidences of fibroid phthisis. In consequence of his contracted chest he suffered from respiratory oppression. When writing the "Kritik," in 1771, his health was seriously impaired; later, it is unceasingly broken. Only by the most systematic living and assiduous care was he able to keep body and soul together. He had, he said, overcome

a tendency to cough. His force of thought was remarkable enough to account for this. It will be recalled in this connection that at the age of seventy he wrote an essay "On the Power of the Mind to Master the Feeling of Illness by Force of Resolution." His life was certainly one long demonstration of the above theorem.

Madame de Staël.—She whom Lamartine characterized as "the last of the Romans under this Cæsar (Napoleon), who dared not destroy her, and could not abase her," died of "a general declension of her constitution." Portal's brochure on her "Malady and Death" does not edify one very much.[12] Her illness was a long one, attended by fever and wasting. Chateaubriand records that "an ardent fever animated her cheeks." "Her features were kindled with an animation which made a strong contrast with her feeble condition" (George Tichnor). Her brilliant intellect was vivacious to the last. She would come home exhausted from evening gatherings where she had been more brilliant than ever.

Thus the clinical picture as presented by her biographers suggests tuberculosis and nothing else.

"Thomas Ingoldsby" (Richard Harris Barham).—The author of the "Ingoldsby Legends" was "endowed with a sanguine temperament and an indefatigable power of work."

The "Legends" were published collectively in 1840. The first one had appeared in 1837. Barham died in 1845 after a long illness, the description of which in his "Life and Letters" is a good account of the clinical characteristics of laryngeal phthisis.

Six of his nine children died during his lifetime.

James Ryder Randall.—The song which Oliver Wendell Holmes characterized as the greatest war song of any nation, "Maryland, My Maryland," was written by Randall at the age of twenty-two. Shortly before this he had gone into a "decline" and had been forced to leave Baltimore and find a refuge farther south, in Louisiana.

" * * * Some powerful influence seemed to possess me, and almost involuntarily I proceeded to write the song of 'My Maryland.'

"I remember that this idea seemed to take shape as music in my brain—some wild air that I cannot now recall. The whole

[12] Friedländer, too, made no diagnosis.

poem was dashed off rapidly when once begun. It was not composed in cold blood, but under what may be called a conflagration of the senses, if not an inspiration of the intellect. No one was more surprised than I was at the widespread and instantaneous popularity of the song I had been so strangely stimulated to write."

Nikolai Vassilyevitch Gogol.—The father of modern Russian realism was afflicted about 1837. The first volume of "Dead Souls" was published in 1842. Gogol died at the age of forty-three. He was one of the greatest of Russian writers.

Fyódor Mikháylovitch Dostoyevski.—Dostoyevski died in 1881 of "lung trouble." "His power of psychological analysis, * * * especially of pathological conditions, aided as he was in this by his complete self-identification with the * * * characters depicted, has nothing similar in all the range of universal literature."

Shakespeare.—As might be supposed, naught but the flimsiest data exist bearing upon the medical history of Shakespeare and his kin. He would be presumptuous indeed who should pretend to contort such data into alleged definitiveness. No sophistry, however, shall be invoked to convert what the writer considers merely suggestive into the golden glow of a factitious vraisemblance. Such a task were more worthy of the literary metaphysicians who live in that intellectual country wherein prevail the chilling blasts of Baconian "brain-storms."

Taine, like many other commentators, considers that Shakespeare reveals himself in many places, particularly in the "Sonnets." "Look now. Do you not see the poet behind the crowd of his creations? They have heralded his approach; they have all shown somewhat of him."

"We pause stupefied," Taine continues, "before these convulsive metaphors, which might have been written by a fevered hand in a night's delirium, * * *."

"Ah, wherefore with infection should he live,
And with his presence grace impiety,
That sin by him advantage should achieve,
And lace itself with his society:
Why should false painting imitate his cheek,
And steal dead seeing of his inward hue?
Why should poor beauty indirectly seek
Roses of shadow, since his rose is true?

Why should he live, now Nature bankrupt is,
Beggar'd of blood to blush through lively veins?
For she hath no exchequer now but his,
And, proud of many, lives upon his gains.
O, him she stores, to show what wealth she had
In days long since, before these last so bad.

"Thus is his cheek the map of days outworn,
When beauty liv'd and died as flowers do now,
Before these bastard signs of fair were borne,
Or durst inhabit on a living brow;
Before the golden tresses of the dead,
The right of sepulchres, were shorn away,
To live a second life on second head;
Ere beauty's dead fleece made another gay:
In him those holy antique hours are seen,
Without all ornament, itself, and true,
Making no summer of another's green,
Robbing no old to dress his beauty new;
And him as for a map doth Nature store,
To show false Art what beauty was of yore.

"That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west;
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

"No longer mourn for me when I am dead,
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:
Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it; for I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.
Or, if (I say) you look upon this verse,
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse;
But let your love even with my life decay;
Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
And mock you with me after I am gone."

As to time of writing, the "Sonnets" date from 1597-1603. In the former year Shakespeare was about thirty-three years old. Some of the sonnets have been said by competent critics "to relate to critical circumstances in Shakespeare's life, of which we know no more than that they must have occurred before 1599." They are unquestionably self-revelatory, these sonnets, though the allusions are veiled. They were written in his youth, thought Coleridge, who, with Wordsworth, believed in their autobiographical character. The latter emphatically declares them to express Shakespeare's "own feelings in his own person."

"* * * in some respects the most interesting of Shakespeare's writings [the 'Sonnets'], as they tell us most about himself." (Garnett and Gosse.)

Says Gerald Massey, in his interpretative book on the "Sonnets": "These sonnets have the authority of parting words; for they were written when Shakespeare was ill, as I understand him. * * * This is a group (Sonnets 63, 67, 68, 71, 72, 73, 74, 81) of very touching sonnets. Nowhere else shall we draw more near to the poet in his own person. They look as if written in contemplation of death. They have a touch of physical languor; the tinge of solemn thought."

"Shakespeare died of a fevour * * *." (From Memoranda of Rev. John Ward, vicar of Stratford-on-Avon in 1662.) He was comparatively idle during the four years and a half that intervened between the writing of the "Tempest" in 1611 and his death.[13] Halliwell-Phillips thinks that he may have written two or three plays, among them "Henry the Eighth," after the performance above alluded to. An active literary career abandoned at the age of forty-seven! He had ceased to act about 1604, or twelve years before his death, being then only forty! His will was prepared in January, 1616, and signed in March, which commentators believe to indicate that he had been in poor health for some time before his death on April 23 of that year. Moreover, we may infer that the visit of Ben Jonson and Drayton to New Place, shortly before his taking to bed, was in the nature of a leave-taking.

Why the delay in signing the will? Did he still have *hopes* of recovery?

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[13] "*Now my charms are all o'erthrown,*
And what strength I have's mine own;
Which is most faint:"—Epilogue, Tempest.

"A remarkable phenomenon attends Shakespeare's later dramatic work. This is his constant endeavor to diminish the labours of composition. In every play known with certainty to have belonged to his later period, 'A Winter's Tale' alone excepted, recourse is had to some device tending to save trouble to the author. * * * The labour-saving tendency * * * is undeniable." "Some portions of 'Henry the Eighth' indicate beyond dispute the authorship of Fletcher * * *."

The portrait on the title-page of the First Folio edition of Shakespeare (British Museum; copied from the original in oils of 1609) reveals a poor physique. Aubrey, it is true, called him "a well-shap't man."

The bust on Shakespeare's tomb is not the original bust described in Sir William Dugdale's "History of the Antiquities of Warwickshire," prepared about 1638. Instead of the "heavy, stupid looking man" portrayed in the present bust we see an individual with hollow cheeks.

Shakespeare's daughter Susanna died at the age of twenty-four, his son Hamnet at the age of eleven. His sister Margaret lived one year, his sister Ann eight years. The brother Richard died in his thirty-ninth year, the brother Edmond in his twenty-seventh year. None of his three grandchildren by his daughter Judith reached the age of twenty. The Shakespeare lineage became extinct in 1670, fifty-four years after the death of the poet.

Did we surely know that Shakespeare was one of the world's great consumptives, a chapter would be added to the evidence bearing upon the Baconian "controversy" that to the writer's mind would be strongly indicative of the authorship of the immortal works of the greatest creative mind of all time, for Bacon's well known history furnishes no suggestion that he suffered from such a disease as tuberculosis. What tuberculous genius ever possessed an "extraordinarily unemotional mind," an "insensibility to emotional sensibilities," "a certain deadness towards exalted moral sentiment"? Did such traits characterize the man whom Ben Jonson addressed as "Sweet Swan of Avon"?

III.

While only a few literary stars of the first magnitude have been discussed in this study, the writer believes that they furnish a more suggestive series than would a small army of lesser

literary lights. Therefore he has omitted from the study such types as Hurrell Froude, Richard Lovelace, George Herbert, John Addington Symonds, Westcott (the author of "David Harum"), "Artemus Ward," Maxim Gorky, Adelaide Ann Procter, Joseph Rodman Drake, Kirke White, E. P. Roe, N. P. Willis, George Ripley, Grace Aguilar, Stephen Crane, H. C. Bunner, John Sterling, Henry Timrod, Paul Laurence Dunbar, the historian Harris, Joel T. Headley, Blackmore, etc. Were these included we would be descending from the high realm of genius to the comparatively commonplace domain of talent, and while this would also serve our purpose in no small degree, it would result in what the writer suspects very few people ever read through, an apparently formidable treatise.

The author submits that the subjects whom he has studied comprise an extraordinarily significant galaxy of creative thinkers. Of special, peculiar and far-reaching import are their messages to mankind, taken in the aggregate.

That tuberculosis tends to occasion, in its vicitms, "peculiar characteristics, incompatible with success and useful labors," is a belief held by certain medical observers and philosophers. There is, of course, a large measure of truth in such a belief, for the shortening of life alone would, *apparently,* make for the cancelling of usefulness. Yet, if we take a large view of all cognate facts bearing upon the matter, we must conclude that the subject does not end here. Judging such facts in the Emersonian spirit, what a debt we owe to the many splendid characters who have been the victims of this disease! Does not this partially offset the economic loss? The tuberculous genius may have been useless from the standpoint of "Diamond Jim" Brady or of "Oily John," but

> "From his dead lips a clearer note is born
> Than ever Triton blew from wreathed horn"!

We may concede that tuberculosis does tend to unfit its victims for the *material* things of life, but we must, if we would strike a balance of truth, place over against this the fact that, in numberless instances, it has acted as a most potential factor in the excitation of certain minds of extraordinary intellectual endowment to more energetic output, the quality of which output has been distinctly enhanced. If it tends to unfit its victims for material success, so also does it tend to quicken and to inspire the intellect—a divine compensation. We may then, with truth,

regard it as a "toad, ugly and venomous, which wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

"There is a dread disease which so prepares its victim, as it were, for death; which so refines it of its grosser aspect, and throws around familiar looks unearthly indications of the coming change—a dread disease, in which the struggle between soul and body is so gradual, quiet, and solemn, and the result so sure, that day by day, and grain by grain, the mortal part wastes and withers away, so that the spirit grows light and sanguine with its lightening load, and, feeling immortality at hand, deems it but a new term of mortal life—a disease in which death and life are so strangely blended, that death takes the glow and hue of life, and life the gaunt and grisly form of death—a disease which medicine never cured, wealth warded off, or poverty could boast exemption from—which sometimes moves in giant strides, and sometimes at a tardy sluggish pace, but, slow or quick, is ever sure and certain."[14]

It is not alone the strenuous—in the ordinary, vulgar sense, who achieve great things. Not always is the race to the physically swift, the battle to the bodily strong. Above these, soaring toward the goal of human greatness, is an intellectual vanguard whose bodies are so weak, whose minds are so finely organized and so subtly stimulated, whose hold upon physical life is so feeble, that it is given to them, in superior degree, to soar upon the wings of fancy into other worlds where all is beauty and "the air is music, there to write down the cadences that they hear. And these cadences, though imperfect, become the songs and the literary gospel of the nations." Men of common clay are but "the pans and the barrows or the porters of the fire"; our tuberculous geniuses "are children of the fire itself, made of it, and only the same divinity transmuted, and at two or three removes."

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[14] "*Nicholas Nickleby*," Chapter 49, paragraph 3.

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